

Those acquainted only with hospital work will be introduced to something quite new to them—the patient-referred problem which may be presented as an emergency but conforms to no pattern and to which as often as not no conventional diagnosis can be applied. He will see something of the behaviour of patients, their relatives, and their doctors under unusual circumstances and stresses, and perhaps realize for the first time how little of medical practice can be systematic and reduced to purely scientific terms. Many of the histories seem to the outside observer incoherent and untidy, some appear to have no beginning, others no ending. This, however, is general practice, whether by night or day.

The doctors, who throughout the book express themselves with disarming frankness and transparent honesty, are the subject of a special analysis by Dr. Lask in which he seeks to show how the character and personality of the doctor influence the management of the call, the doctor's response to the patient's emergency. This chapter is particularly revealing to those psycho-analytically inclined.

The book as a whole tells of an aspect of London night-life about which next to nothing is known, and it gives an indication of the needs of ordinary people which are met by family doctors who indeed minister to the fear in the dark.

R. J. F. H. PINSENT.

BRAINWASHING

Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism. A Study of "Brainwashing" in China. By Robert Liston, M.D. (Pp. 510+x 30s.) London: Victor Gollancz Ltd. 1961.

Britain has in the past been somewhat suspicious of the effectiveness of planned scientific techniques of indoctrination. The Ministry of Defence, in a Government White Paper issued after the Korean War, even went as far as to declare that no prisoner-of-war officer or senior N.C.O. had been seriously affected by the indoctrination techniques used there, which, they admitted, had got at many of the ordinary ranks. Obviously, senior personnel had not been examined properly and this probably led to the recent and tragic Blake fiasco.

Liston did not make the same mistake, and he took immense trouble to examine repeatedly and in detail some twenty European and American people who had been subjected to intensive indoctrination in Chinese prisons before their final release back to their countries. He found all of them to have been profoundly affected in various ways by their experiences, though after release they might deny that they remained true Communist converts. He describes the intensive and frighteningly effective techniques used and the variations in results seen with different individuals. He also reports on the techniques of group indoctrination practised outside prison on selected Chinese personnel as one of the means of rapidly changing intellectuals, scientists, and businessmen from old to new patterns of thought.

Liston has most probably been psychoanalysed, and some may think he has been unduly influenced by this particular form of indoctrination. For these highly mechanistic and physiological techniques of brainwashing have been seen by him from far too limited a theoretical neo-Freudian and philosophic angle. This produces what seem to be serious incompatibilities between the facts presented and the accompanying

theories of how they work. This is a fault to be found in much other American work on such methods. But the book reports a mass of fascinating and factual data which demands very serious study indeed by those who will, sooner or later, have to become increasingly concerned with this whole problem.

WILLIAM SARGANT.

HUMAN EMBRYOLOGY

The Stages of Human Development Before Birth. An Introduction to Human Embryology. By E. Blechschmidt, M.D. (Pp. 684; illustrated. 96 Swiss Fr.) New York and Basle, Switzerland: S. Karger. 1961.

This atlas sets out to give a pictorial morphological survey of human development, especially during the first two months of gestation. It is subdivided into three main sections: "Human Ova," "Human Embryos," and "Body Regions in Human Embryos." As the author points out it is only within the last two decades—and, I would add, mainly due to the contributions made by the investigators in the Department of Embryology in Baltimore of the Carnegie Institution of Washington—that it has been possible to give a comprehensive account of the early stages of human development. The format of the atlas is such that each page is divided into two columns, one giving the German text and the other the English text.

It is not clear what purpose this atlas will serve. The text is little more than legends to the figures, and so there is little descriptive sequence. Many of the photomicrographs have either been prepared from poorly fixed material, or their reproduction has not been well executed. It is unfortunate that the English translation and proof-reading have not been carried out in collaboration with an embryologist.

W. J. HAMILTON.

SOCIAL SURVEY OF MENTAL DEFECT

The Mentally Handicapped and Their Families. A Social Survey. Maudsley Monographs Number Seven. By J. Tizard and Jacqueline C. Grad. (Pp. 146+x. 28s.) London, New York, and Toronto: Oxford University Press. 1961.

A few years ago there was very little literature about mental retardation. There is now much more but it is of very variable quality. A new volume by Dr. Tizard and Miss Grad from the Institute of Psychiatry gives information which is essential to any serious student of the subject. It reports a social survey of mental defect in London and fills many gaps in existing knowledge. It is a book which should be in all medical libraries and should be read by all those working in the hospital or local authority service who are concerned with the handicapped child. Previous studies have tended, as in Penrose's famous Colchester survey,¹ to concentrate on the more readily accessible hospital population, but the present authors studied two samples of families: in the first sample there were 150 families with an idiot or imbecile child at home, and in the second there were 100 families with a similar child in an institution. They were thus able to give a picture of the social circumstances of children cared for in the community and to compare this with the background of the institutional child. This type of information has been very scant previously. It is a pity that owing to publishing delays the results of this survey, begun in 1954, have only now appeared in print.